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Fostering Active Learning Among Student Occupational Therapists Using Lonergan's Generalized Empirical Method

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Implementation

- Course: Psychosocial Studies and Group Process I, first clinical course
1. Attend to experience and focus on a quest for insights.
 2. Use strategies of questioning and self-testing and connect new information with prior knowledge.
 3. Think out loud and tolerate messiness (trial and error, false starts, blind alleys, red herrings, etc.).
 4. Utilize worksheets, intervention plan models, and other activities as heuristic devices for gaining insights into case vignettes.
 5. See frames of reference as heuristic devices to gain insight into the nature of occupational dysfunction in case vignettes.
 6. Formulate insights into dysfunction as problem statements to test out as hypotheses.

What I Do When I Know?

- Experience and attend to data
- Pose questions for understanding
- Utilize heuristic devices and strategies
- Insight comes:** the act of understanding
- Formulate insights and test them against data
- Make judgments of true or not true (evidence)
- Make decisions (add valuing to knowing)

Transcendental Precepts

Search for what is really true and truly good.

1. Be attentive
2. Be intelligent
3. Be reasonable
4. Be responsible

Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1904-1984) proposed a cognitional theory of the mental activities by which we human beings come to know anything in any practical or academic field. His Generalized Empirical Method proceeds by way of reflection on our consciousness of what we know and, simultaneously, of our knowing it. The GEM seeks insight into the dynamics of our cognitive activities on both a theoretical and a personal level. It promotes a discipline of *self-appropriation* that can engender a progressive transformation of our awareness of ourselves as knowers and the world we seek to make intelligible. (See the transcendental precepts.) It offers a basis for understanding our development as intelligent persons and professionals and fosters the professional values of active lifelong learning, reflective practice, and interprofessional dialogue.

AOTA's Philosophy of Occupational Therapy Education

"[A]ctive learning ...engages the learner in a collaborative process that builds on prior knowledge and experience and integrates professional academic knowledge, experiential learning, clinical reasoning, and self-reflection. Occupational therapy education promotes integration of philosophical and theoretical knowledge, values, beliefs, ethics, and technical skills for broad application to practice for those individuals with and without impairments and limitations." (Haynes & Jones, 2007, p. 129)

Sample Student Insights

1. Problem statements I write must specify the nature of limitations in occupational performance and participation, because that is the focus of occupational therapy.
2. In planning intervention, the client goals and intervention strategies must focus on what can be achieved within the intervention setting, even though they may be connected to desired outcomes beyond the scope of the therapy program or beyond discharge that may be the rationale for the intervention plan.
3. Cole's (2012) seven-step group process format can center around activities in all areas of occupation, not only social participation. Occupations in all areas generate experiences that can be processed.